

Corruption in NCAA Basketball: Evidence for Bias in Seeding the NCAA Men's Basketball Tournament

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Abstract

Since its founding in 1939, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) Men's Basketball Tournament has continuously grown in popularity and today is considered to be the premier sporting event as well as a revenue producing sanctuary for the NCAA. In 2011, the tournament expanded and allowed the opportunity for 68 teams to compete. The possibility for increased revenue due to expansion would suggest unspoken motivations to ensure teams with larger fan bases be given better positions (seeds) to increase their chances of prolonging their stay in the tournament. Also, it should be noted that there is large financial implications for participating conferences due to each game representing monetary value which is given to each team's ability to place itself in a specific round. The result of this has suggested in recent years that there might be a conference bias in favor of major conference members. Studies have been conducted that show evidence suggesting that even though the NCAA selection committee does an acceptable job of evaluating ability and correctly seeding the teams for the tournament there is evidence of selection bias in seeding non-power conference teams higher (in this case better) than their play throughout the season permits. This study examines as to whether or not there is a bias in the selection of major conference teams based on the selection committee members sole affiliation with the power conferences and whether or not there is a bias in the selection procedure due to power conference membership. We will employ the NCAA Men's Basketball tournament data from 2007 to 2014. By modifying Zimmer and Kuethe's (2008) selection bias model [$Score = \beta_0 + \beta_1(Seed) + \sum_i \beta_i (Conference) + \epsilon$], we will test whether teams from the mid-major and minor conferences are seeded positions higher than the model would predict. The results of the study will be presented at the conference.